This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

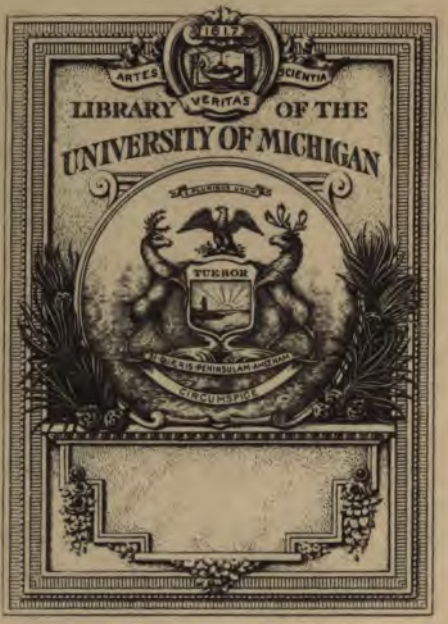
+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

50
C56
1725

H1.6


1817
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE

BL
50
.C56
1725

THE
Previous Queſtion,
With regard to
RELIGION.

BOOKS sold by J. DARBY *in* Bartholomew-Close.

BAYLE's Miscellaneous Reflections, occasion'd by the appearance of a Comet, 2 Vol. exploding Popular Superstitions.

——Philosophical Commentary on the Words in St. *Luke*, *Compel them to come in*, &c. against Persecution. 2 Vol.

Tracts by the Ever-memorable Mr. *John Hales* of *Eton*; containing, his Discourse of Schism, the Power of the Keys, *&c.*

THE

Previous Question

With regard to

RELIGION;

Humbly offer'd, as necessary to be consider'd, in order to the settling and determining all other Questions on this Subject.

By Thomas Chubb.

The Second Edition.

LONDON:

Printed by J. Darby in *Bartholomew-Close*; and sold by J. Noon near *Mercers-Chapel* in *Cheapside*, and J. Roberts in *Warwick-Lane*, MDCCXXV. Price 6 *d*.

English
Blackwell
10-31-36
32861

THE Previous Question,

With regard to

RELIGION.

AS there is not any thing within the Compaſs of human Knowledge, which Man is more concerned to diſcover, than what is *true Religion*; ſo there is not any Subject, Men have exerciſed their Thoughts upon, which

which has been more controverted, or that has produced more direful Effects amongst Mankind.

THE Disputes betwixt Christians, Mahometans, Jews, and Pagans, and betwixt the several Sects that take place amongst each of these, are generally about Religion; each Party thinking themselves obliged to defend and propagate what they esteem to be really such, and to root out, and abolish what they judge to be otherwise. And,

AS the Questions on this Subject are various, so there is one Question, namely, *What true Religion arises from, and is founded upon*, that is previous to them all; the right understanding and settling of which Point, is necessary to the clearing and settling of the rest: With regard to which, I observe;

TRUE Religion, I think, must arise from, and be founded upon, either the *moral Fitness of things*, or the *arbitrary Will and Pleasure of God*: And this, I think, will

will plainly appear, when I have stated the Notion, and shewn in what Sense I understand the several Terms I here make use of.

BY the Term *Religion*, I understand that which is the *Ground* of *Divine Acceptance*: Or, in other Words, it is that which does render Men acceptable and pleasing to God. And,

BY *true* Religion, I mean that which does *really* do so; in opposition to every thing, which Men imagine or pretend will do it, when, in reality, it does not.

BY the *moral* Fitness of things, I mean that Fitness, which arises from, and is founded in the *Nature* and the *Relations of Things*; taking it for granted, that there is an essential Difference betwixt Good and Evil, or Fitness and Unfitness, arising from the Nature and the Relations of Things, antecedent to, and independent of any divine or human Determination concerning them: So that,

JJA

WHEN I ſay true Religion ariſes from, and is founded upon the moral Fitneſs of Things; my meaning is (ſuppoſing that to be the Caſe) that the Duty which God requires at our hands, is ſuch, as, in the nature of Things, is fit and proper to be required of, and expected from Creatures conſtituted, circumſtanced, and related as we are; and that the Ground of his being pleaſed with, and ſhewing us Favour, is, becauſe we are the ſuitable and proper Objects of his Approbation and Affection.

THE Term, *Arbitrary*, is oppoſed to *Reſtraint*; and when it is apply'd to *human* Actions, the Reſtraint is of two kinds, namely, *Political*, and *Moral*.

POLITICAL Reſtraint is that which ariſes from the Law and Conſtitution of every Country, in which Men live, or which they rule over. And Men are ſaid to act or not to act Arbitrarily, as their Actions are not, or as they are, govern'd and reſtrain'd by thoſe Laws. As thus:

ALL those Princes, who act according to their own Will and Pleasure, and who have the sole Power of making Laws for, and the disposing of the Persons and Properties of their Subjects; such Princes are said to be Arbitrary: And their Government is called Arbitrary Government, because they are not under the Direction not the Restraint of Law, in the Exercise of it.

ON the other side, when Men act, or rule, not according to their own Will and Pleasure, but by, or according to a precedent Law; then they are said not to act or rule Arbitrarily. As, when the King of *Great Britain* acts agreeably to the Laws of this Kingdom, then he is said not to act arbitrarily, that is, not to act against, or above Law; because, in all such Cases, his Actions are govern'd and restrain'd by the Laws of his Country.

IT is not the good or bad Principle the Action springs from, nor yet the good or evil it produces, which denominates the

Action to be Arbitrary in this respect, or to be the contrary; but only as the Actor is under, or above the Restraint of human Laws, as aforesaid.

MORAL Restraint is that which arises from the moral fitness of Things: And Men are said to act arbitrarily in this respect, when they are under no such Restraint; that is, when they act without any regard to the fitness, or unfitness of things, as aforesaid. And, on the other side, they are said not to act arbitrarily, in this respect, when they make the moral fitness of things, the Rule and Measure of their Actions.

TO apply the Term *Arbitrary* to God, it can respect only *moral* Restraint. For tho human Laws are Rules for Men to direct their Behaviour by, and therefore Mens Actions may properly be said to be arbitrary, or to be otherwise, as the Actor is under, or above the Restraint of such Laws; yet these are not a Rule to God. And therefore if his Actions are directed by any Law, it must be by the Fitness of things, and consequently he cannot properly

perly be ſaid to act arbitrarily, or the contrary, any otherwiſe, than as he is not, or as he is influenced, and reſtrained by the moral Fitneſs of things as aforeſaid. So that when I apply the Term *Arbitrary* to God, I oppoſe it to moral Reſtraint, as above explained: which leads me to obſerve;

BY the Arbitrary Will of God, I mean (ſuppoſing this to be the Caſe) that he is not influenced and governed in his Dealings with his Creatures, by the moral fitneſs of things, but by ſovereign Pleaſure: he commands and forbids, loves and hates, rewards and puniſhes Arbitrarily, that is, without regarding the fitneſs, or unfitneſs of what he requires, or diſpenſes; or the ſuitableneſs, or unſuitableneſs of the Objects of his Approbation, or Diſlike. And,

WHEN I ſay true Religion is founded upon the arbitrary Will of God, my meaning is (ſuppoſing that to be the Caſe) that the Duty which God requires from us, and which when complied with, will render us the Objects of his Favour, does not ariſe

from its being right and fit, in the nature of things, but merely from sovereign Pleasure: God makes whatever he pleases the Conditions of his Favour, without any regard to Right or Wrong in the Case.

HAVING thus explain'd the Terms, I think it evidently appears that *true Religion*, or that which will render Men acceptable to God, must be either, *what God has arbitrarily made the Conditions of his Favour*; or else, *that which, in the nature of Things, renders Men the suitable and proper Objects of it*: Which of these is the Case is the present Question. And,

THAT this Question, in Order of Nature, goes before all other Questions on this Subject; and that the settling of it is necessary to the Settlement of the rest, and consequently, that it is of the greatest importance to Mankind; this, I think, will as evidently appear as the former, when I have fairly examin'd the Point, and shewn how the Case will stand, in the several Particulars following, whether we consider true Religion as founded on the moral

fitness

fitness of Things, or on arbitrary Pleasure, as aforesaid. And,

FIRST, if true Religion arises from, and is founded upon the moral fitness of Things, then God in this respect answers the Character, which the whole Frame of Nature gives him; that is, he acts the part of a *wise* and *good Being*.

IT is the utmost Perfection of Wisdom and Goodness, for a Being, who has all Knowledge and all Power absolutely and independently in himself, and is at perfect liberty in the Use and Exercise of these; for such an one, when he has call'd *moral Agents* into Being, not to take advantage of the *Impotency* and *Dependency* of such Creatures, by *imposing* upon them, or acting *arbitrarily* with them, or by them; but, on the contrary, to make the *moral* Fitness of Things the *Rule* and *Measure* of his *Actions*, with regard to what he requires from, and dispenses to them: this, I say, is Wisdom and Goodness to perfection. And this is the very Case with respect to God, supposing true Religion arises from, and

and is founded upon the moral fitness of Things, as aforesaid.

GOD can, with regard to his natural Liberty and Ability, command from us, and deal with us, as he pleases; he being above all possibility of Controul: And therefore, for him not to make use of his Knowledge and Power disagreeably, or to the disadvantage of his Creatures, but to direct these by the Rules of Wisdom and Goodness, in all his Dealings with them; this is truly valuable, and highly worthy of that God, who is, by his own Choice, the *common Parent* of every Creature, as he *voluntarily* call'd them into Being. On the other side,

IF true Religion is founded on the arbitrary Will of God, then God does not, in this respect, answer the Character which Nature has given him; that is, he *does not* act the part of a *wise* and *good Being*.

ONE who has all Knowledge and Power absolutely and independently in himself, and consequently must most clearly discern the

the essential Differences in Things; and, who is at perfect liberty to act from what Motive he pleases; for such a *Being* to *neglect*, or *refuse* to act agreeably to the Nature, and the Relations of things, and to make mere *capricious Humour* (if I may so speak) the *Rule* and *Measure* of his *Actions*; for such an one to command for commanding sake, and not because what he requires is fit, and proper to be commanded; for such an one to love and value, hate and despise, either Persons or Things, without regarding the suitableness or unsuitableness of the Persons, or the Things themselves; these are Demonstrations of the *want* of *Wisdom* and *Goodness* in such a Being: and yet this is the Case with respect to God, supposing true Religion to be founded upon his arbitrary Will and Pleasure, as aforesaid.

GOD can, with regard to his natural Liberty and Power, act arbitrarily with his Creatures in matters of Religion; that is, with respect to their Duty and his Acceptance: And so he can act the part of a *weak* and *childish*, or of an *evil* and *vi-*

cious

tious Being. But he cannot act thus, and preserve his *moral* Character; he cannot perform such a Part, and yet be a wise and good Being; because the doing so, is absolutely inconsistent with that Character. Again,

SECONDLY, if true Religion is founded on the moral fitness of Things, then Man, by *his own natural Ability* (consider'd as a Man) is qualified to *discover it*.

MAN is a Creature endow'd with a Faculty or Power we call *Understanding*, in the exercise of which, he is capable of discerning the essential Difference betwixt Good and Evil, or Fitness and Unfitness, as they arise from, and are founded in the Nature and the Relations of Things: which Good and Evil is call'd *Moral*, as it is the *Object* of the *Understanding*, and is discover'd by it only; and as it is distinguished from that Good and Evil which is *Natural* or *Physical*, which is the *Object* of our *Senses*, and is discover'd by them alone.

MAN

MAN being thus furnish'd with the Faculty of Understanding, and true Religion being founded on the moral Fitness of Things, he must of course be qualified to discover it, because it falls within the proper Province of the foremention'd Faculty.

LET him but turn his Thoughts upon himself, and consider how he is constituted and circumstanced, and how he stands naturally related to God, and to his fellow-Creatures; and then he may with ease discover and certainly know, what he must be and do, to render himself acceptable to such a wise and good Being, as (upon the present supposition) God is allow'd to be; and what it is, in the Nature of Things, which will make him a suitable and proper Object of Divine Approbation, or Dislike. I say, a Man by the exercise of his Understanding, may easily know what is true Religion; because it consists in acting *agreeably* to his *Nature*, *Relations*, and *Circumstances*, as aforesaid; which Agreeableness, his Understanding qualifies him to discover.

IT is true, there may be Cases attended with such *perplexing* Circumstances, and whose Consequences may be so very *uncertain*, that it may be exceeding difficult to know what is best and fittest to be done. But then, even in these Cases, if a Man, after due Examination, does that which upon the *whole*, appears to him to be *best*, that is, what is most for the *common* Good; he will not fail of divine Acceptance, whatever the Consequence of his Behaviour may be. For, as he makes Wisdom and Goodness the Rule and Measure of his Actions, so, if God is a wise and good Being (as is here supposed) he will *approve* of such a Conduct. On the other side,

IF true Religion is founded on the arbitrary Will of God, then Man is *not*, by *his own natural Ability*, qualify'd to *discover* it: He has not any Footsteps to trace, nor any Rule to guide him, in his Enquiries after it. He is in this Case in a much worse Condition, than the blind Man is in, when in pursuit of the Objects of Sight: For tho the blind Man cannot discover the Object

sought

ſought for, by that Senſe, yet, poſſibly, he may do it by another; whereas in the preſent Caſe, Man has not any natural Faculty, which can *diſcover* what is true Religion, or *diſtinguiſh* it from the contrary.

THE exerciſe of his Underſtanding cannot ſtand him in any ſtead. For tho it qualifies him to diſcern, and judge of moral Subjects; yet as Religion, in this Caſe, is not of moral Conſideration (it ariſing only from arbitrary Pleaſure) ſo it does not come within the reach of this diſcerning Faculty. And therefore thoſe Men ſay *right*, who ſay that *Reaſon* has not any thing to do with *Religion*; ſuppoſing true Religion to be founded on arbitrary Pleaſure, and that by Reaſon is meant either the Exerciſe of the forementioned Faculty, or the Object of it, *viz*, the moral Fitneſs of Things.

TO *reaſon* in this Caſe, is exceedingly abſurd, and is the ſame, as if a Man ſhould attempt to diſtinguiſh *Colours* by his *Ear*. Reaſon, in the Nature of the thing, cannot diſcover, or be at all a Judge of thoſe things

which depend only on the arbitrary Will of God: such things as these, are discoverable only by divine Revelation; so it is that alone which must determine every thing concerning them. Which leads me to observe,

THIRDLY, If true Religion is founded on the moral Fitness of Things, then Man is naturally qualify'd to *distinguish* betwixt *Divine Revelation* and *Delusion*; at least he is qualify'd to guard against all such Delusion, as is *hurtful* to Mankind.

WHEN any thing comes forth under the Character of Divine Revelation, our Understandings qualify us to examine and judge, whether it is agreeable with, or contrary to the Nature and the Relations of Things. And tho its Agreeableness with the Nature of things, is no certain Proof that it is Divine, but only that it *may* be so; yet its Disagreeableness therewith is a Demonstration, that it *cannot* possibly come from God; seeing (upon the present Supposition) God makes the moral Fitness of things the

rule

rule and measure of his Actions; which such a Revelation is repugnant to.

FOR the farther Illustration of this Point, I shall offer the following Cases.

SUPPOSE a Man should come to me under the Character of a heavenly Messenger, and should declare it to be the Will of God, that I should love my Neighbour as my self, and do unto all Men, as I would they should do unto me, (taking these general Rules with their proper Limitations) and that in doing so I should recommend my self to divine Regard: And, suppose this Man was not sent of God, but was himself under a Delusion; I examine his Message, and find that it is right and fit, in the Nature of Things, that I should do as it requires; and that in so doing I render my self a suitable Subject of divine Favour: I likewise (from the suitableness of the Message) am induced to give credit to what the Man declares of himself, *viz.* that he is a Messenger sent from God. Now, tho in this latter Point I am deceived, yet it is not to my hurt; and if I am prevailed

upon

upon by it, to render myſelf more agreeable and uſeful than I ſhould otherwiſe have been, the Deluſion will prove a Benefit to me, and to thoſe I have to do withal. Again,

SUPPOSE a Man ſhould come to me, and pretend himſelf a heavenly Meſſenger, as aforeſaid; and ſhould declare it to be the Will of God, that I ſhould afflict and grieve my fellow-Creatures, without any juſt Cauſe, that is, for not agreeing with me in ſome ſpeculative Points, which do not admit of abſolute Certainty on either ſide of the Queſtion; and in like Caſes, where in the Nature of the thing, there is not a proper Foundation for Reſentment; and that in ſo doing I ſhould entitle my ſelf to divine Favour: I examine this Meſſage, and find it really diſagreeable in the Nature of Things; and from hence conclude very juſtly, that this Meſſage is not Divine, and conſequently that the Meſſenger is either deluded himſelf, or elſe that he is an Impoſtor.

SO

SO that I have a plain Rule to direct and guide my Judgment, in diſtinguiſhing betwixt Divine Revelation, and all dangerous and hurtful Deluſions: And therefore, as I ſaid before, tho in this Caſe we are not abſolutely ſecure from all Impoſition, yet we are qualify'd to guard againſt all ſuch as is prejudicial to Mankind; as I have here ſhewn. Whereas, on the other ſide,

IF true Religion is founded on arbitrary Pleaſure, then Man is not qualify'd to diſtinguiſh betwixt Divine Revelation and Deluſion, and conſequently lies open to, and at the mercy of every Impoſer.

THE *internal* Characters of a Revelation, whether good or bad, afford no Light in this Caſe. For, as God makes whatever he pleaſes the Conditions of his Favour, ſo the Goodneſs or Badneſs of a Revelation, or of what is required by it, cannot poſſibly prove it to be Divine, or to be the contrary.

IF I should take upon me to prove a Revelation to be Divine, or to be otherwise, from its agreeableness with, or its being contrary to Truth, Justice, Goodness, *&c.* it would be just the same, as if I attempted to prove, that a Man can see, by giving several Instances in which it is evident that he heard; there being no more Connexion betwixt Justice, Goodness, *&c.* and arbitrary Pleasure, so as to argue from one to the other, than there is betwixt Colour and Sound.

THE Case is the same with respect to any thing *external*, such as Miracles, which may attend a Revelation: the having these, or the want of them, cannot possibly prove a Revelation to be Divine, or to be the contrary.

THE *having* them proves nothing, in the present Case; because Miracles are Evidences of the *Power*, but not of the *Veracity* of the Being that works them; and consequently, they may attend a *Lye*, for any thing

thing we know, or for any just Ground we have to think the contrary.

TO urge in this Case, that God will not use his Power, nor suffer other Beings, *viz.* Evil Spirits, to use theirs, for the Confirmation of a Lye, in a matter of such Importance; this is the same as to say, that God does not act Arbitrarily, but from the Fitness of Things; because this Argument is founded upon the *moral* Unfitness of such a Conduct. Again,

THE *want* of Miracles does not avail any thing, with regard to the Divinity of a Revelation, or the contrary. For as God does not make the Fitness of Things, but sovereign Pleasure, the Rule and Measure of his Actions; so when he gives a Revelation, it must be wholly at his pleasure, whether Miracles shall attend it or not: and consequently, we cannot fairly conclude from the want of Miracles, either for or against the Divinity of that Revelation, they do not attend. Again,

FOURTHLY, If true Religion is founded on the moral Fitness of Things, then Man is naturally qualify'd to discover the *true Sense* and *Meaning* of Divine Revelation; at least he is, or may be secure from all *dangerous* and *hurtful Errors*.

DIVINE Revelation, in this Case, must accord with the Nature and Relations of Things; and therefore, if any Difficulty should arise about the Sense and Meaning of any Branch of it, Man has a safe and plain Rule, *viz.* the Fitness of Things, to interpret it by; which in the Nature of the Thing, is most *likely* to lead him into the true Sense of it: however, it will secure him from all dangerous Errors; because he cannot possibly fall into a *hurtful* Error, when the moral Fitness of Things is his Guide.

IF it should be urged, That the Fitness of Things is a proper Guide in this Case, with regard to those Parts of Divine Revelation that relate to Practice; yet it can give no light

light with regard to those Points, which are purely speculative:

I ANSWER, Points of Speculation are of two kinds, *viz.* those which are absolutely so, and those which are so only with regard to us. As to the former, they relate to the physical Nature of Things; and therefore if God shall think fit to give any Revelations of this kind, then it must be granted, that the moral Fitness of Things can give no Light in such Cases. But then it ought to be remembred, that God will either so *clearly* deliver such Points, as that there shall be *no place* for Error, or else he will *excuse* all Errors which arise from them; it being most absurd and ridiculous, to suppose, that such a wise and good Being, as (upon the present Supposition) God is allowed to be, should give a Revelation in a way, in which it is liable to be misunderstood, and then be displeased with his Creatures, if they mistake the Sense of it; seeing such Errors are not, in the Nature of the Thing, a proper Foundation for Resentment.

AS to the latter, *viz.* Points of Speculation, which are so only with regard to us, these relate to Facts past, present, or to come, performed by God, or some other Agent; with respect to which, the same Answer in general will serve, as in the former Case; namely, That if God shall think fit to reveal any thing of this kind, he will either make the Revelation so *plain*, as that there shall be no Place for Error, or else, *excuse* all Errors which spring from it. And,

IF the Point be such as relates to divine Conduct, either what God has done, or will do; and if any difficulty arise about the Sense and Meaning of any such Branch of divine Revelation; then I say, the *Fitness of Things* is the *best Rule* to *interpret* it by; and is most likely to lead us into the true Sense and Meaning of it. And the Reason of this is evident, namely, because (upon the present Supposition) it is the moral Fitness of Things, which is the Rule and Measure of God's Actions. On the other side,

IF

IF true Religion is founded on the arbitrary Will of God, and if God gives a Revelation to Mankind, then Man is not naturally qualified to discover the true Sense and Meaning of it, he not having any thing to guide him in his Enquiries; and therefore must be under the utmost Uncertainty in that Case. For,

AS God acts from sovereign Pleasure, so he may deliver his Mind either clearly or darkly, expressly or in Figures; he may use the same Term in the same or in different Senses, and apply it properly or improperly to the Subject, as he pleases; And Man has not any thing to assist or guide him in his Searches after Truth.

TO *reason* in this Case, is likewise *absurd*; because that which arises from arbitrary Pleasure, is out of Reason's Province: and therefore those Men say right, who say that Reason is not a Judge of the Sense and Meaning of Divine Revelation; and that it must be interpreted by the same Spirit, which gave it. I say, this is evidently the Case, supposing God acts arbitrarily

trarily with his Creatures; only this Difficulty will still remain, namely, That we have as little assurance of the Sense and Meaning of any second explanatory Revelation, as of the first.

TO say in this Case, that God will not suffer a sincere and honest Enquirer, who seeks his Face, to fall into, or continue in any dangerous Error; this, if it be urged with any strength, is to reason from the moral Fitness of Things, which is here supposed to be discarded. And,

AS Man is not secure from Error, so his Errors may be made as fatal to him as his Maker pleases: God may, if he please, punish every Mistake with eternal Misery; and if he should do so (the contrary to which we cannot be assured of, upon the present Supposition) there is no Relief, for who can deliver out of his Hand? Again,

FIFTHLY and lastly, If true Religion is founded on the moral Fitness of Things, then it is one plain, simple, uniform

form Thing, which admits of no Alteration, with regard to Time or Place, any otherwiſe than as the Nature, the Relations, and the Circumſtances of Things differ or change.

TRUE Religion is the ſame in all Ages, in all Countries, and in all Worlds, (if I may ſo ſpeak;) for if any of the other Planets are inhabited with Creatures conſtituted, circumſtanced, and related as we are, their Religion muſt of courſe be the ſame as ours is; the moral Fitneſs of Things being the ſame in all Space, and thro all Duration.

NOTE, I would not here be underſtood to exclude all poſitive Inſtitutions: for, as the Circumſtances of Things may render ſome Inſtitutions proper and uſeful to mankind, as *contributing* to *Virtue*, or *true Goodneſs*; ſo when that is the Caſe, there is a moral Fitneſs even in thoſe Inſtitutions, not for any intrinſick Goodneſs in them, but upon the account of that Virtue they are ſubſervient to. On the other ſide,

IF true Religion is founded on the arbitrary Will of God, then it depends upon his Pleasure, whether it shall be the same at all Times, and to all People, or not; he may, if he pleases, make different Terms of Acceptance, in every Age, and to every Nation or Family; and that which entitles to his Favour to day, may draw forth his Displeasure to morrow, for any thing we know, or for any Ground we have to think the contrary.

TO say in this Case, that God will always make known his Pleasure to us, when he makes any such Change with regard to Religion, this is what we can have no just Ground for. That it is right and fit, in the Nature of Things, for God to act thus fairly with his Creatures, will be granted; but what has Right and Fit to do, or what Influence can they have, where arbitrary Pleasure is the Rule of Action? Which is the present Case.

THUS,

THUS, I think, I have given a fair Representation of this Matter, and have shewn in all the Instances I have given above, how the Case will stand, whether we consider true Religion as founded on the *moral Fitness of Things*, or on *the arbitrary Will of God*. And I imagine, it will easily be discerned, of what great *Importance* this *Question* is, and what *Necessity* there is of *determining* it, in order to the *settling* and *determining* all other *Questions* on this *Subject*. But,

POSSIBLY it may be urged, that I have started a Difficulty, but not removed it; and therefore I crave leave to observe farther, that there are two Ways only, in which we are capable of bringing this Point to an Issue; namely, *First*, by examining what it is, which God makes the Rule of Action in other Cases, and so to argue by Analogy; that is, to infer from his Conduct in one Case, how he will act in another: and, *Secondly*, to examine what it is, in the Nature of

Things, which is most likely to direct and determine his Actions. And,

FIRST, If we examine what it is, which God makes the Rule of Action in other Cases, we shall find that it is the moral Fitness of Things. Whoever takes a view of this Planet, and of all the other Works of God, which come within the reach of human Knowledge, will easily see the Marks of Wisdom and Goodness that run thro the Whole; every Part being directed to answer some wise and good End.

TO go about to exemplify this by an Induction of Particulars, would be to offer an affront to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind; it being that which falls within every Man's Observation, tho it is more abundantly evident to all those who are qualify'd to examine and look into the Works of Nature: And therefore, if an Argument drawn from *Analogy*, is at any time of weight, it must be so in the present Case; and consequently, true Religion is not founded on arbitrary Pleasure,

sure, but on the moral Fitness of Things. Again,

SECONDLY, If we examine what it is, in the Nature of Things, which is most likely to direct and determine God's Actions, we shall find it to be the moral Fitness of Things; as aforesaid.

THAT God is, and what he is, with regard to his natural Properties, these I shall not meddle with the Proof of; but shall take it for granted, that God is, and that he is necessarily an Immense, Eternal, All-knowing, All-powerful, and consequently a Self-sufficient, Independent, and Unchangeable Being.

THIS being allowed, from hence it will follow, that as God is always capable of doing what is most worthy and valuable in itself, and which in the Nature of Things is right, good, best, and fittest to be done; seeing he knows wherein the Goodness, Fitness, and Valuableness of every Action lies; so it is most likely, that he always will act thus, because right, good,

&c. are so very beautiful and excellent in themselves, and so highly preferable in the Nature of Things, to arbitrary Pleasure, that God cannot but be under a stronger Disposition to make these, rather than the other, the Rule and Measure of his Actions.

SO that whether we consider the Method of God's Dealing in other Cases, or whether we consult the Nature of Things; these both conclude very strongly, that true Religion arises from, and is founded upon the moral Fitness of Things, and not the arbitrary Will of God.

IF it should be urged, Allowing that God does *generally* make the Fitness of Things the Rule of his Actions, yet it will not follow that he *always* does so; he is the Great and only Potentate, whose Dominion is underived, and therefore he may *sometimes* act Arbitrarily, to shew his Creatures the absolute Sovereignty he has over them:

I AN-

I ANSWER, God may or can do thus with regard to any Physical Necessity he is under to the contrary: But that he does act thus, will not be allowed; for if the moral Fitness of Things is a Motive proper and sufficient to influence the Divine Conduct in *one* Case, it must be so in *every* Case; the Reason being the same, and as proper to influence in *all* Cases, as in *some*. Besides,

THIS is measuring the Ways of God, by what we see take place among *weak* and *vain* Men; they are apt to shew the Power and Dominion they have over their fellow Creatures, by acting such a Part as the Objection supposes: but can we have so mean and contemptible a Thought of our Maker? Can we imagine that our wise and good God will prefer such an *affected shew* of *Greatness*, to what is *truly Great* and *Valuable*? Yea, rather let us call back the ungenerous Thought, with a *God forbid!*

NOTE, When I say it will not be allow'd that God acts Arbitrarily, my meaning is, that he will not act thus in all those Cases where

where the moral Fitness of Things can be a Rule to him: As to all other Cases, he must act Arbitrarily, if he acts at all; because the Fitness of Things does not come into the Question. As thus:

SUPPOSE it equally indifferent with regard to this System, and all other Systems in the Universe, that the Solar System be placed where it now is, or in any other Part of Space; then Fitness, or Unfitness, does not come into the Case: and therefore the placing the Solar System in this Part of Space, and not in any other, must be Arbitrary; because there was not any thing in the Nature of Things which could give the Preference, and make it more fit, that it should be placed where it is, rather than in any other Part of Space.

THE END.

SOLD by J. DARBY *in* Bartholomew-Close,

CHaracteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. In THREE VOL. By the Right Honourable *ANTHONY*, Earl of SHAFTESBURY. The THIRD EDITION.

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE Previous Question With Regard to RELIGION;

WHEREIN

Several Objections made to the *Previous Question* are examin'd:

AND

In which GOD's *Moral Character* is more fully vindicated.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By THOMAS CHUBB.

LONDON:

Printed by J. DARBY in *Bartholomew-Close*; and sold by J. NOON near *Mercers-Chapel* in *Cheapside*, and J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-Lane*. M.DCCXXV.

Price 6 *d.*

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE Previous Question.

SIR,

I TAKE it very kindly that you would inform me of what has been urg'd to you by way of Objection to my *Previous Question*. For, tho I cannot but think my ſelf in the right, the contrary Suppoſition implying in it a plain Contradiction; yet, ſeeing Error is what all Men are liable to, and ſeeing my Mind may poſſibly be biaſs'd by ſome unſeen Prejudice in its favour; therefore I cannot but think it proper to examine with Care and Freedom whatever is offer'd againſt any Opinion I embrace or maintain.

IN the Pamphlet refer'd to, I only gave a fair representation of the Case, without entering into any of those Questions the Subject is liable to, or might be perplexed with; designing thereby to bring it into as narrow a Compass as possible. And, if this was a defect, I hope it will be supply'd in the following Lines, in which I shall examine what the Gentleman (your Friend) has been pleas'd to urge against it.

THE Sum of what is objected, may (if I understand it aright) be reduced to the two following Propositions.

PROPOSITION I.

Tho God does in some Instances act from or according to the moral Fitness of Things, yet he does not always do so; that is, he sometimes acts arbitrarily.

PROPOSITION II.

Tho true Religion, or that which is the ground of divine Acceptance, does consist in doing what is right and fit in the Nature of Things; yet it does not consist in this alone, but also in our complying with those Forms of Worship which are of divine Institution. So that, tho we do the former; yet we shall not be accepted of God, unless we perform the latter.

BE-

BEFORE I proceed, I beg leave to obſerve, that, in order to judge aright of the moral Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of any Action, every *Circumſtance* and *Conſequence*, which ſtands *related* to it, muſt be taken into the Caſe: becauſe the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of any Action ariſes from the *good* or *bad* Purpoſes it is *ſubſervient* to; and theſe oftentimes ariſe from the *different* Circumſtances the Action is perform'd under. So that the ſame Action may be morally *fit* under ſome Circumſtances, and *unfit* under others. And from hence it is, that in ſome Caſes we, not being *apprix'd* of the Circumſtances that attend an Action or the Conſequences which follow it, judg the Action fit at the *Performance*, and afterwards are convinc'd of the *contrary*. Again,

I OBSERVE, that, at the Concluſion of my *previous Queſtion*, I made the following Remark: "Note, when I ſay, it will not be "allow'd that God acts arbitrarily, my mean-"ing is, that he will not act thus in all thoſe "Caſes, in which the moral Fitneſs of things "*can* be a *Rule* to him. As to all other Ca-"ſes, he muſt act arbitrarily if he acts at "all; becauſe the Fitneſs of things does not "come into the Queſtion."

THESE things being premiſed, I proceed to conſider,

PRO-

PROPOSITION I.

Tho God does in some Instances act from or according to the moral Fitness of Things, yet he does not always do so; that is, he sometimes acts arbitrarily.

WITH regard to this Proposition, I shall *first* examine the Proposition itself: And, *secondly*, what the Gentleman has offer'd for the Proof of it. And,

FIRST, with regard to the Proposition itself, I observe, that, whereas it saith God sometimes acts arbitrarily, the meaning of this must be, as it is urged by way of Objection to what I have laid down, that he acts thus in some Instances in which the moral Fitness of things *can* be a *Rule* to him; and, consequently, if he made the moral Fitness of things a Rule to him in those Instances, he would act *otherwise*. I say, this must be the meaning of the Proposition, as it is urged by way of Objection against me; because to urge, that God acts arbitrarily in such Instances in which the moral Fitness of things *cannot* be a *Rule* to him, is to urge that against which I have not *opposed* any thing; and consequently, is wholly *foreign* to the present Question.

SO that the obvious meaning of the Proposition is this, namely, That tho God does in

in *some* Instances act *from* or *according* to the *moral Fitness* of things, yet he sometimes acts *contrary* to it; which in other words is the same as to say, that *in some Instances God's Actions are morally evil.* The Sense of the Proposition being settled, *viz.* that God sometimes makes the moral Fitness of things the Rule and Measure of his Actions, and sometimes acts contrary to it, I now proceed to shew that it is erroneous. And,

FIRST, tho it could be made appear that God *does* in *Fact* sometimes do what is *right* and *fit* in the Nature of things, and that sometimes he acts *otherwise*; yet it would not follow, that the Fitness of things was a *Rule* to him; that is, that it was the *Ground* or *Reason* of his acting in *any Case*: because he might act from capricious Humour, as well in those Instances in which he acts *right*, as in those in which he acts *wrong*. Like the unjust Judge in the Gospel, who, tho he neither *feared God* nor *regarded Man*, yet he would do the Widow *Justice* that required it, lest, by her continual coming, she should weary him. He would do a *right* Action, tho it were from a *wrong* Motive or Principle. Again,

SECONDLY, if God makes the moral Fitness of things a Rule to him in *some* Instances, (which is allow'd in the Proposition) then he will do it in *every* Instance, in which that Fitness *can* be a *Rule* to him. And the

Rea-

Reaſon of this is evident, namely, that as the moral Fitneſs of things is in its *own Nature* truly excellent and valuable, and highly *preferable* to capricious Humour and arbitrary Pleaſure; and, as God knows full well wherein the Fitneſs and Valuableneſs of every Action lies; and, as he cannot poſſibly be under any *Temptation* to act *wrong*: ſo this will always be a *Reaſon*, ariſing from the *Nature* of things, for God to prefer a *rational* Conduct before *Arbitrary Pleaſure*, and to direct his *Actions* accordingly.

IT is true, that Man, tho he is qualified to diſcern and judge betwixt *good* and *evil*, yet, notwithſtanding this, he ſometimes acts *right* and ſometimes *wrong*. And the Reaſon of this is likewiſe evident, namely, that as Man is a compounded Creature, conſiſting partly of *Underſtanding*, partly of *Appetite*, of *Affection*, &c. and as each part of his Compoſition affords a diſtinct kind of *Motive* or *Excitement* to Action: ſo he ſometimes acts from one Motive, and ſometimes from another. And this gives occaſion for his *mixed Character*, viz. that he ſometimes acts right, and ſometimes otherwiſe; he ſometimes *follows Reaſon*, and ſometimes acts *againſt it*. But this cannot be the Caſe with reſpect to God, who, as he knows the moral Difference in things, ſo he has no *Self-intereſt* nor *vitiated* Affection to miſlead him (which is generally the Caſe with reſpect to Men)

And,

And, therefore, he will, not only in *some* Instances, but in *every* Case do what is right and fit in the Nature of Things. Having thus shewn that the Proposition is erroneous; I now proceed,

SECONDLY, to examine what the Gentleman has offered to support it.

IN my *Previous Question* I brought two Arguments to prove, that God always makes the moral Fitness of Things, and not arbitrary Pleasure, the Rule and Measure of his Actions. And I do not understand, that the Gentleman attempted to shew the *weakness* and *inconclusiveness* of those Arguments; but only, in opposition to them, he urged an Argument drawn from *Fact*, by producing two Instances, *viz.* the *prohibiting* Adam *and* Eve *to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and the *prohibiting the Use of Swines-flesh to the* Israelites: which Instances he urg'd as a *Proof*, that God *sometimes* acts Arbitrarily. And here I observe;

THAT it is supposed, as these Instances are urged against me, that it was really *wrong* in the *Nature of Things* for God to make those Prohibitions. And indeed I grant it would be so; supposing the Things prohibited were *proper* and *useful*, and that *no ill Consequence* attended the Enjoyment of them: because here is a Reason for, but no Reason against that Enjoyment. But this does not appear to be the

Caſe; and therefore the contrary ought rather to be preſumed.

AS to the firſt Inſtance; tho the prohibited Fruit might be *proper Food* for the *Serpent*, yet it might be *otherwiſe* to *Man*. For, tho it was agreeable to the Senſes, and gave a briskneſs to the Spirits; yet the taking plentifully of that Fruit might tend to the *Hurt* and *Diſſolution* of the human Compoſition. And, ſuppoſing this to be the Caſe, then here is a Reaſon for the Prohibition; and conſequently this is not an Inſtance of Arbitrary Pleaſure.

HERE is a Reaſon for the Prohibition, namely, becauſe this Fruit was prejudicial and hurtful to Mankind, *In the Day thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt* (or thou wilt) *ſurely die* (or contribute to thy Death.)

AS to the ſecond Inſtance, namely, *the prohibiting the Uſe of Swines-fleſh to the* Jews: this I think likewiſe falls ſhort of Proof, as in the former Caſe. For, tho Swines-fleſh might be *proper Food* in *one Climate*; yet it might be very *hurtful* in *another*: And this might poſſibly be the Caſe with reſpect to the Land of *Canaan*. The taking plentifully of that Food might introduce the *Leproſy* or ſome other Diſorder very *afflictive* or *diſagreeable* to Mankind. And, if this was the Caſe, then here is a Reaſon ariſing from the Nature of Things for the Prohibition; and conſequently this is *not* an Inſtance of Arbitrary Pleaſure.

IF it ſhould be urged; that theſe are mere Suppoſitions, which have no Foundation in the Hiſtory.

I ANSWER: allowing them to be ſuch; yet, if God governs himſelf by the moral Fitneſs of Things in his Dealings with his Creatures (which I think I have proved that he does,) then *theſe*, or ſomething *like* theſe, muſt be the Caſe.

IF any ſhould yet inſiſt; that theſe are Inſtances of Arbitrary Pleaſure.

I ANSWER: this is begging the Queſtion; and, if theſe Prohibitions are allow'd to be *Divine*, then there is a *moral* Certainty of the Contrary. Beſides, whoever thus inſiſts, I think it will lie upon him to prove (upon the foot of God's acting Arbitrarily) that the forementioned *Prohibitions* are *Divine*; which I think cannot be done, as I have ſhewn in my *Previous Queſtion* (Obſervation the 3d) and which I now come more particularly to conſider. And,

Tho all Religions which are founded on Revelation ſtand upon a foot in this Caſe; yet, ſeeing the ſuppoſed Inſtances of arbitrary Pleaſure, which are urged againſt me, are taken from the *Jewiſh Revelation*; therefore I ſhall make the *Divinity* of that Revelation the Subject of my preſent Inquiry. And,

LEST my Opponents ſhould fall under any *Difficulty* with regard to the *Hiſtorian*; the *tranſmitting* the *Hiſtory*; or the Facts recorded

corded in it: I shall, in favour of them, give them leave to take for granted that *Moses* was the Writer of all the Books which are commonly ascribed to him; that those Books have been truly transmitted to us without Corruption; and that the Facts, (*viz.* the turning a Rod into a Serpent, Water into Blood and the like) were real as they are recorded. And farther, that those Facts were *supernatural*; that is, they were above the *natural* Ability or *inherent* Power of Man to perform; and consequently, that they were performed by the Agency or Co-operation of an *invisible* Being.

THIS being the state of the Case; the Question will be, whether this *Revelation* and that *Law*, of which *Moses* is allow'd to be the Promulger, is Divine; seeing the supernatural Operations abovemention'd were wrought to prove it to be such. And,

THE true Answer to this Question will be, that this is perfectly *uncertain* upon the *present Supposition*; because God *may* act Arbitrarily in this Instance, as well as in any other Case; for any thing we *know*, or can *shew* to the *contrary*. That is, tho those supernatural Operations were wrought to prove what *Moses* declared to be true; yet, notwithstanding this, *Moses* might be but an *Impostor*: because God might, in this Case, as an Instance of his arbitrary Pleasure, either use his *own Power*, or *permit* some other invisible Agent to exert *such*

Power,

Power, for the *Confirmation* of this *Imposition*. I say, this *may* be the Case, for any thing we know. For, as God is here supposed *sometimes* to act Arbitrarily; so this may be *such* an Instance of his arbitrary Pleasure; seeing we have no *Rule* by which we can judge *when he acts thus*, and *when he acts otherwise*.

IF it should be urged; that such a Conduct, *viz.* the using of his Power, or the suffering other invisible Agents to use theirs, for the Confirmation of a Lye, in a matter of such Importance, is inconsistent with God's moral Perfections.

I ANSWER; so is every other Instance of arbitrary Pleasure. And therefore, if an Argument drawn from God's *moral* Perfections is *conclusive* in *one* Case, it must be so in *every* Case: and, if such an Argument is *inconclusive* in *one* Instance, it will be so in *every* Instance. And from hence I think it plainly appears, what a *precarious* Foot the *Divinity* of every Religion stands upon, which is built upon *Revelation*; supposing God acts Arbitrarily, as aforesaid: because from hence it evidently appears *impossible*, in the Nature of Things, to prove any Revelation to be *Divine* upon *this Principle*.

Besides, supposing we could be able to prove a Revelation to be Divine upon the present Supposition; yet still we should be in a very *evil* Case; because God might, as an Instance of his arbitrary Pleasure, actually deceive us

him-

himself; as well as leave us in the Hands of other *Deceivers*. And this leads me to ask of those Men (who maintain that God *sometimes* acts Arbitrarily) how they can *certainly know*, what will *please* God, and what are the *sure Grounds* upon which they build their *Trust* and *Confidence* in him.

IF they say, that divine Revelation is the *Rule* of their Actions, and the *Ground* of their Confidence: alas! this, in Consequence of their own Principles, is like that broken Reed *Egypt* (if I may be allow'd to use the Prophet's Expression) upon which, if a Man lean, it may disappoint his Trust. For, if God sometimes acts Arbitrarily, as in this Case he is under no *Restraint*; so he must be perfectly at *Liberty* to *deceive* his Creatures, whensoever he pleases; and consequently, the Foundation of *Certainty*, with regard to *Revelation Evidence*, is taken away upon this Principle. And this leads me to put to those Men their own Question; which I will leave to them to answer: What, has not God a *Right* to do, what he will with his *own*? which is the same, as to say, May he not *deceive* his *own Creatures*, if he pleases!

BUT I persuade my self, that the greatest *Advocates* for Arbitrariness in God will not allow that he is *equally* disposed to reveal the *Truth* or a *Lye*; and that he does either of these at *Pleasure*: but, on the contrary, they will be ready to affirm, that *the Supreme Being*

is a God of Truth, who cannot lye; and therefore is the *proper Object* of their Trust. Which, if there be any meaning or consistency in their Words, is the same as to say, that *Truth* in the present Case, is so *preferable* to *Deceit* and *Falshood*; that God cannot but be disposed, from the *Reason* of the thing, to prefer the former before the latter, and to govern his Actions accordingly. But then,

I MUST take the Freedom to turn their Argument upon them; by observing, that, if God is always disposed to reveal the Truth from the *moral Fitness* of such a *Conduct*, and therefore is the proper Object of our Confidence: Then, I say, with equal Reason, that he acts *agreeably* to the moral Fitness of Things in *every* other Case; because the Reason holds as *strong*, and therefore will have as great an *Influence* upon him to direct his Practice in one Case as in another. And consequently, he will be as much disposed, from the *Reason* of the Thing, to do what is right and fit in *every* Case; as he is to *reveal* the *Truth* in any *Declaration* or *Promise* he makes to his Creatures.

IF it should be urged, allowing that God does make the moral Fitness of Things the Measure of his Actions in all those Cases in which that Fitness can be a Rule to him; yet seeing Men are liable to make a *wrong* Judgment, therefore it must be *right* to submit to every divine Command, because the Command would not be given if there were

not an *antecedent Fitness* in the thing commanded; and that this was the Case of *Abraham* when he was required to offer his Son in Sacrifice, in which Case *Abraham* could not see the *Fitness* of such an Action, because it had the *appearance* of the contrary.

I ANSWER, As God sees thro and to the end of things, and thereby has a perfect View of all the Circumstances and Consequences which attend our Actions; so he must see wherein the Fitness or Unfitness of every Action lies, and consequently must be a much better Judge in many Cases than Man can possibly be, whose Views are vastly contracted. And,

THEREFORE, I say, that in all those Cases in which there is no *apparent Unfitness*, and where we are satisfied of the *Divinity* of the Command, there this will be a *Reason* for our Compliance: and if we should be under a Delusion in judging the Command to be Divine, when in reality it is not, yet the Delusion would not be hurtful. But,

IF the thing commanded *appears to us* morally unfit, then there is not any thing which can give us a *reasonable* Satisfaction that the Commandment is *Divine*, because here is the highest Presumption to the *contrary*. It is not enough to say in this Case, that our Judgment ought to *submit* to the infallible Judgment of God, with regard to the Fitness of the Thing *commanded*, because that would be to take

the

the Thing for *granted* which is in dispute; the present Question not being whether our Judgment ought to come in *Competition* with the Judgment of our Maker, but only whether the *Command* in question is of a divine Original or not.

BESIDES, if our Judgment of the Fitness of Things is to be left out of the Case, then we are laid open to the most *hurtful* and *ridiculous* Impositions. For if we should urge the Cruelty and Barbarity and the like of any Institution, as an Argument against its *Divinity*, the same Answer may be as justly returned in every Case; namely, that tho these may *appear* morally unfit to us, yet it may be *otherwise* with regard to God, and that therefore we ought to *submit* our Judgment to the Judgment of our Maker.

TO this I may add, that if such a Case should happen as, that the thing commanded has the *appearance* of unfitness, when in reality it is *otherwise*, every wise and good Governor will do all that is necessary to *secure Obedience*, and consequently will give the *Reason* of the Command as well as the Command itself, and thereby cut off that *Exception* against Obedience, which otherwise the Command would be liable to. And, as God can have no End to answer in giving such Commands, but purely the *Good* and *Benefit* of his Creatures; so he will most certainly not only give the Command, but also re-

 veal

veal the *Reason*, and shew the *Fitness* of it: Seeing this is absolutely necessary to cut off all *Disputes*, which otherwise may *justly* arise whether the Command is *Divine* or not.

AS to the Case of *Abraham*, I think (with submission) that the Thing commanded, was in itself *morally unfit*, and that God gave the Command not with an Intent that it should be obeyed, but that he might take an occasion from it, to shew to *Abraham* and to all his Posterity, the *unfitness of all human Sacrifices*. And that this was the Case, is, I think, evident from the Event. For as the Command was given to *Abraham* to be a trial of his Integrity; so when that End was answer'd, and *Abraham* had shewn a steddy Resolution that he would deny himself in so signal an Instance, rather than neglect to do what he judged to be his Duty; then God *recalled* the Command, and thereby testified his *dislike*, and shewed the *unfitness of all such Practices*.

BUT that I may go to the bottom of all, and thereby remove what may be a *Foundation* for Objection, in the present Case; I beg leave to observe, that Government, properly so called, or Government, whose Fitness is *founded* in the Nature of Things, is no other than the Exercise of Power, for the *Benefit* of those that are *governed*: And Governors are no other than *Guardians* of the

the *Happiness* of those they are Governors to. So that if those who have the reins of Government in their hands, imploy their Power otherwise than for the good of those they have under their Care, this is the *abuse* of Power; this is *Tyranny*, and not Government, strictly speaking: and all Instances of mere *Sovereignty*, that is of Power, shewn for the sake of shewing it, and not for the good of those who are subjected to it; I say, all such Instances are Manifestations not of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, but of the *Weakness* and *Vanity* of the Legislator.

THE Case is the same, whether we consider Government as exercised by a *Divine* or a *Human* Person; only with this Difference, that if we consider Power as misapplied, when in a divine Hand, it has this to *aggravate* the Case; namely, that it was done without any *Temptation* to it: whereas Men are sometimes under a Temptation to *misapply* their Power, as aforesaid. But we have this for our Consolation, that God will not imploy his governing Power *childishly* or *hurtfully*, but rightly, to answer the Purposes of a *wise* and *good* Government.

It is true, God is our *Creator*, who has called us into Being; and our continuing to be, and to be what we are, is owing to his good Pleasure. But then it is to be remembered, that our *Obligations* to God arise not from his being barely and simply our *Creator*,

but from his being a *kind* Creator to us. Barely to be, is no *Favour*, and consequently can lay no *Obligation*: but to Be, to our *Advantage*, that is a Favour which calls for our Acknowledgment, and obliges us to walk worthy of it, and to make a Return of Favour again, if the Case will admit it, and requires it; which here it does not.

GOD's being our *Creator*, cannot possibly give him a right to exercise his Dominion over us *unreasonably*, and to our *hurt*, (I say, and to our hurt, except our *Demerit* renders us the proper Objects of his *Displeasure*) it being altogether as unreasonable, and unfit, in the Nature of the Thing, for God to act *arbitrarily* or *disagreeably* with his Creatures, as it is for those Creatures to deal thus one with another. God's calling us into being, without our *Consent*, does indeed render it fit, in the nature of the Thing, that he should make a *Provision* for our *well-being*, as we are Creatures capable of Happiness, and of the contrary: and as one or other of these must be our Case; because to Be in *such* a state would be a *Hardship* and an *Injury* to us, without a Provision for our well-being, which Provision (to our *Comfort*, and to our *Creator's Praise*) he has *plentifully* made for his Creatures.

THE Duty that we owe to God and to our fellow Creatures arises from our being *constituted*, *circumstanced* and *related* as we

are;

are; and the doing what is right and fit, in the Nature of Things. This becomes a *Rule* and *Law* to us, not as we are Creatures, but as we are *intelligent Beings*; that is, as we are qualified to discern the moral Difference betwixt good and evil, and to direct our Actions accordingly. For tho God is the *Author* of our Nature, and of those Relations we stand in to him and to each other, yet when a Creature is *thus* constituted and *thus* related; the Duty, which he is in *Reason* obliged to, will *necessarily* and *unavoidably* arise from his *Composition* and his *Relations* as aforesaid. And this will always be the Case; that is, it will be eternally fit, in the nature of the Thing, for a Creature constituted and related as Man is, to act a Part *suitable* to and *becoming* human Nature. I say, this will always be his Duty, whether God interposes by a Revelation, and gives any Commandment concerning it, or not. And,

AS the doing what is right and fit, in the Nature of Things, becomes a Rule and Law to us, as we are intelligent Beings; so, in the Nature of the Thing, it is a *Rule* to *God*, if I may so speak, that is, it is *equally* as fit that God should act *agreeably* to this Rule, as any other intelligent Being whatsoever. And, consequently, as this will always be the Measure of God's Actions, so he will *approve* or *disapprove* of the Actions of his intel-

intelligent Creatures, as they are *agreeable* with, or *contrary* to, this Rule. So that the *Ground* or *Reason* why God is pleased with one Action, and displeased with another, is not because one is done in *Obedience* to a divine *Command*, and another is not; but because the Actions themselves are the *proper Objects* of his Approbation or Dislike. For, as the valuableness of every Command arises from the *good* Purposes it is made subservient to; so the valuableness of Obedience must *spring* from the same Root. To do a thing merely because it is commanded, as there is not any thing *valuable* in the Action, so it reflects *Dishonour* upon the Legislator; because it supposes that the Action would not be done, were it not to *gratify* such a Humorist.

IF *Abraham* had sacrificed his Son, in *Obedience* to the divine Command, (which, as I observed above, God never intended he should, but the contrary, by shewing his dislike of all such Practices;) in such a Case, tho the Simplicity, Honesty and Integrity of *Abraham* would have been *commendable*; yet the Action it self would have been *abominable* both in the Eyes of *God* and *Man*, as it was an Instance of Cruelty, for a Father to imbrue his Hands in the Blood of his *own Son*, when that Son had not done any thing, which made him forfeit his Title to his *Father's Protection*, much less to forfeit his *Life*;

Life: and, as it bespoke the Being, to whom the Sacrifice was offered, to be of an *evil Disposition*; because the Action supposes that he either *delighted* in, or that his *Resentment* was *removed*, by such an Instance of Barbarity. If it should be said that the Action would have been *sanctified* by the divine Command, which would have been the *Ground* or *Reason* of it: I answer, if it was an evil Action, *antecedent* to the Command, it must be so *after* it; because the divine Command cannot possibly *alter* the Nature of Things, and make a Fact good which in the Nature of the Thing is evil.

IN fine, no one can, in the nature of the Thing, have a Right of Dominion over us, any further than to rule us for our *good*; as I observed above: and therefore the true *Ground* of all Subjection, whether it be to human or to divine Authority, is, that the Government is exercised for the *common Tranquillity*.

HAVING consider'd the first Proposition, and what has been urged in its Defence; I proceed to

PRO-

PROPOSITION II.

Tho true Religion, or that which is the Ground of divine Acceptance, does consist in doing what is right and fit, in the Nature of Things; yet it does not consist in this alone, but also in our complying with those Forms of Worship, which are of divine Institution. So that tho we do the former, yet we shall not be acceptable to God, except we perform the latter.

THE Difficulties, if there are any, which may arise from this Proposition, I imagine will be removed by what I shall say in the following Observations. And,

FIRST, I observe, that the Term *Worship* is used, to signify something *external*, either *Words* or *Actions*. And these Words or Actions are used, to express the inward *Respect* and *Value* that one Person has for another. And accordingly, when Men are said to *worship God*, they are supposed to perform something *external*, by which they express the Sense they have of the *Excellency* and *Valuableness* of their *Maker*. This I take to be the common, plain, and intelligible Sense of the Term Worship. Again,

I OBSERVE, secondly, that no Action, which is *ridiculous* in itself, or that is *hurtful* to Mankind, can, in the Nature of the *Thing*, be an Act of Worship when *commanded*.

manded. For, tho Compliance with ſuch a Command, is an Inſtance of *Subjection*; yet it cannot be a mark of *Reſpect*; becauſe it ſets forth not the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, but the *Weakneſs* or *Unreaſonableneſs* of the Legiſlator.

For Example; ſuppoſe a People ſhould be required by their Governor to repair to a particular Place at a particular time, and there to ſtand on their *Heads*, or to *cut* and *wound* their Bodys. In this Caſe, Compliance with ſuch Commands cannot poſſibly expreſs the inward Senſe, which the Action has of the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of the Legiſlator, becauſe the Action itſelf naturally and unavoidably expreſſes the *contrary:* that is, in one Inſtance it plainly ſhews the Legiſlator to be *weak* and *childiſh*, and in the other that he *unreaſonably* applies his Authority to the *Hurt* and *Damage* of his Subjects. But this ſurely cannot be the Caſe with reſpect to God; who, as he always directs his Actions by the Rules of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, ſo he will not apply his Authority *childiſhly* or *unreaſonably*, as aforeſaid: much leſs will he make Compliance with ſuch Laws, the *Ground* of *divine Acceptance*; becauſe that would be to *approve* of what is really *diſagreeable.* And,

IF a Perſon ſhould unhappily fall under a Government, where ſuch Laws take place as aforeſaid; and, if ſome much greater evil attends his *non-Compliance* with ſuch Laws:

In such a Case, tho there is no *Reason* for Compliance arising from the thing commanded, but plainly a Reason against it; nor yet from the Authority of the Lawgiver, seeing no one can have a *Right* in the Nature of the Thing to command what is *unreasonable* in itself: yet Compliance would be right; because when two Evils present themselves, and one or other of them must of necessity be *submitted* to, then it is right and fit, in the Nature of things, that we should chuse the least. Again,

I OBSERVE, thirdly, that, if there are any Words or Actions which are in themselves *natural* Marks of Respect; and, if we worship God in the use of these, this is doing what is right and fit in the Nature of Things; whether such Forms of Worship are of *divine* Institution or not. And, consequently, these do not come into the *present Question*: because the Forms of Worship, mentioned in the Proposition, are considered as *over* and *above* what is right and fit in the Nature of Things; and therefore cannot be considered as such. Again,

I OBSERVE, fourthly, that the Forms of Worship, which I think properly come into the present Question, are such external Words and Actions, as are *not* in themselves *natural* Marks of Respect or Disrespect; but are capable of being made *one* or the *other*, either by *Custom*, by *human*, or by *divine Authority*.

FOR

FOR Example, suppose *bowing* the *Body* towards the *East*, or towards a *carved Image*, are Actions which in themselves are not natural Marks of Respect, nor Disrespect; and that no *ill* Consequence was likely to attend the use of one, more than the other. And, suppose God (to prevent Contention and Discord, and to keep Mankind in Unity amongst themselves) should kindly interpose, and require Men to worship or pay their Respect to him in the use of one or other of those Actions before mentioned. In this Case the Question will be; whether there is a moral Fitness, or not, in our complying with such a Command. If there is; then this likewise falls within the Definition, which I have given of true Religion, *viz.* it is doing what is right and fit in the Nature of Things. Now,

IN order to judge aright of the Fitness or Unfitness of such an Action, all *Circumstances* and *Consequences* which stand related to it, must be taken into the Case; as I observed above. If there are no Circumstances attending it, nor any Consequences following upon it, which render the Action unfit, then I think with submission, that there is a moral Fitness in our *complying* with such a *Law*; as it is a submitting to the Pleasure of one, who watches over us for our *good*; and, as it contributes to *Peace* and *Unity* amongst Mankind. But,

IF our Lot ſhould be caſt amongſt Men who do not believe this Form of Worſhip to be of *divine* Inſtitution, and who ſet up another Form of Worſhip in *Diſtinction* from and in *Oppoſition* to it; and if our Compliance with the divine Command introduces *Miſery* to our ſelves and *Confuſion* to the Publick; in ſuch a Caſe that Compliance would, in the Nature of the Thing, be perfectly *wrong*; becauſe it would be the preferring a thing, which was in it ſelf *indifferent*, to the *Happineſs* of our own *Life* and the *Peace* of the *Publick*, which are certainly more *valuable*.

IF it ſhould be urged, that God expects our Compliance with ſuch his Commands; tho they are attended with thoſe or the like Circumſtances and Conſequences, as aforeſaid.

I ANSWER. This is not only begging the Queſtion; but it is likewiſe a breaking in upon the *ſpotleſs Character* of our heavenly Father, by repreſenting him not as a *wiſe* and *good*, but as a *peeviſh* and *ill-natur'd* Being; as one, who takes up an *unreaſonable* Reſentment at the *prudent* Conduct of his Children. And for the better illuſtration of this Point, I beg leave to relate the following Story.

A MAN who liv'd at *Salisbury*, had two Sons, living in *London*. And he, being deſirous of ſeeing them, wrote a Letter, and ordered them to come to him at ſuch a time. And that they might afford Aſſiſtance, Protection, and Comfort to each other in their

Jour-

Journey; he ordered them to come home together. Now there being two Roads from *London* to *Salisbury*; the one by the way of *Andover*, and the other by the way of *Winchester*; and these Roads being indifferent in themselves with regard to the *ease* and *safety* of Travellers, when the Father wrote his Letter: he therefore, to prevent any *Contention* and *Discord* that might arise betwixt his Sons about which Road they should take, gave it in Charge, that they should come by the way of *Winchester*. But before the time was expired for the Sons to take their Journey according to the appointment of their Father, there hapned to fall an abundance of Rain; which filled the ways with Water, and swelled the Rivers to such a Degree, as rendered their travelling the Road by the way of *Winchester* exceeding *hazardous* of their *Lives*. Now, this being the Case, the Question will be; how the Sons ought in *reason* to act; and what a *wise* and a *kind* Father could reasonably expect from them.

THE elder Son tenaciously adhered to the Command of his Father; and thought it was right that he should run all *Hazards*, rather than act contrary to what he judged to be his *Duty*; *Obedience* to his Father's Command in the present Case, he esteeming to be such. But the younger thought otherwise. And accordingly, he took the liberty to reason the Case with his Brother after this manner.

OUR

OUR Father (said he) gave this Commandment to us, not out of *capricious Humour*, and to answer no *good* End; much less hereby, to lay a *Trap* for our *Lives*: but, on the contrary, he intended it for our *good*, by cutting off all occasion for *Contention* betwixt us, that otherwise might have arisen, about which way we should take. And, seeing his End in giving this Command, is as well answered by our going to *Salisbury* by the way of *Andover* as by the way of *Winchester*; and seeing we cannot take the latter Road, without the utmost *hazard* of our *Lives*: it must, therefore, be highly *reasonable* in it self, and most *acceptable* to our Father, that we act *contrary* to his Command in this Particular; as the Circumstances of things now stand.

BESIDES, said he, if we follow the Command in the present Case; it must highly reflect upon the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of our Father; because this supposes, that he prefers a *Trifle* to the *Safety* and *Lives* of his *Children*; which surely we can have no Reason to think. But tho the younger thus reasoned the Case; yet it did not work Conviction in the elder Brother: he still concluding, that such Reasoning and such a Conduct did savour more of *Policy* and *worldly Wisdom* than of *Duty* and *Obedience*; the latter, in his Opinion, being vastly preferable to the *former*. The elder Brother, being thus resolv'd

solv'd to adhere strictly to the *Letter* of his Father's Command, took his Journey towards *Salisbury* by the way of *Winchester*: which proved very *fatal* to him; for it unhappily issued in his *Death*. And this gave occasion for different Reflections: some Men judging that he had given an Instance of great *Weakness*, and that he had *trifled* away his *Life*; but others thought the contrary, concluding that hereby he had given an Instance of great *Virtue*, by his thus gloriously suffering *Martyrdom* for the sake of his *Duty*, and to keep a *good Conscience*.

THE younger Brother set out for *Salisbury* by the way of *Andover*. And, as he came home in *Safety*; so he had no sooner come to his Father, and had given him an account of his and his Brother's separation from each other; but the dead Corps of his elder Brother was likewise brought home: the sight of which threw their Father into the utmost Confusion. But,

WHEN he had recover'd himself, and had reduced his Passion to Reason; he beheld his dead Son, and wept over him. He much commended his *Honesty* and *Integrity*; in that he would hazard his Life, rather than do a thing which appeared to him to be *wrong*: He pitied his *Weakness*, and lamented his *Misfortune*. And, turning himself to his younger Son, he *rejoiced* and was *comforted*; admiring and approving of the *justness* of his *Reasoning*;

and

and the *Prudence* of his *Conduct:* looking upon both, as the happy means of preſerving his own Life. For, as he gave the Commandment purely out of *Kindneſs*, and for his Childrens *Good*; ſo he judged, that if it had proved the unhappy Occaſion of both their Deaths, it would have brought down his gray Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave.

THUS ends my Story: and I think the Caſes are parallel (ſo far as one is neceſſary to illuſtrate the other) and the Application is eaſy.

IF it ſhould be urged; that this reflects ſadly upon the *Conduct* of the *Apoſtles* of Chriſt; who ran all *Hazards*, and laid down their *Lives* for the ſake of the Goſpel.

I ANSWER. The Caſe of the Apoſtles was in no wiſe parallel to the Caſe before us. They were commanded to publiſh to the World the Doctrine of *Repentance*, and *Remiſſion* of *Sins*; that is, they were ſent forth to convince Mankind, that as their Sin and Wickedneſs expoſed them to *divine Diſpleaſure*; ſo their Repentance and Reformation would recommend them to *Mercy*. And as theſe are Truths, in which the *Honour* of God and the *Happineſs* of Mankind, as to this World and that to come, are nearly concern'd; ſo they were in the Nature of the thing, worthy of the Apoſtles *Labours* to *propagate* them, and of their *Lives* to *maintain* them. But,

THO

THO the Apoſtles were ready to ſpend and be ſpent in order to propagate and defend the Truths before mention'd, and the heavenly Character of Him from whom they received them; yet their *Judgment* and *Conduct*, with regard to *Ceremonys*, was quite otherwiſe. With them Circumciſion (that is, the uſe of Ceremonies) was nothing: and Uncircumciſion (that is, the neglect of Ceremonies) was nothing; but as the Circumſtances of Things rendred the uſe, or the neglect of theſe, for the good and benefit of Mankind. And thus St. *Paul* took and circumciſed *Timothy*, to prevent the unreaſonable Reſentment of the *Jews*. And thus, he neglected to baptize the *Corinthians*, (tho Baptiſm was inſerted in the Apoſtolical Commiſſion) that hereby he might prevent his being eſteemed the Head of a Party, and the evil Conſequences which might follow upon it. Again,

I OBSERVE fifthly, that tho the Circumſtances and Conſequences which attend our Compliance with thoſe Forms of Worſhip which are of divine Inſtitution, does render that Compliance fit and proper in the Nature of Things: yet, I think, Compliance cannot be ſo far the *Ground* of *divine Acceptance*; as that our non-Compliance, in ſuch a Caſe, would be a *Bar* to that Acceptance. For as on the one ſide, all Men, who are diſpoſed to worſhip God, will be led, from the Nature of the Thing, to do it in that way,

in which they think it will be *best* accepted; so on the other side, if a Person should think it *right*, and accordingly *drops* a Ceremony of divine Institution, when the Circumstances of Things render it proper to be preserved and used; or if he should *use* or *plead* for the use of such a Ceremony, when the Circumstances of things render it fit to be *neglected*, and to be *silent* about it: as such a Conduct is the effect of a *mistaken Judgment* only, and not of a *vitious Mind*; so it cannot be a proper Foundation for *Resentment*, and consequently can be no *Bar* to *divine* Acceptance.

THE Sum of the matter is this: If God is in reality a wise and good Being, which surely none will be so hardy as to deny; then it will follow, that in all his Dealings with his Creatures, he will act a Part *sutable* to, and *becoming* such a Character.

THUS, Sir, I have laid before you the above Observations; in order to remove every Difficulty which might arise from the second Proposition. And here I should have ended my Letter; were it not for some other *Complaints* which my *Previous Question* has occasioned; and which it may be expected I should take notice of. And these are two; namely *first*, that the Terms *moral Fitness* and *Unfitness* do not *clearly* express the *Ideas* which I annex to them; and, *secondly*, that I am *pleading* the Cause of *Infidelity*.

AS

AS to the first I observe; that the Distinctions of *Good* and *Evil* arise from, and are founded in, the *Nature* and the *Relations* of Things: And those are usually distinguished into two Sorts, *viz. natural* and *moral*. By natural good, I mean that, which gives *Pleasure* and *Delight*; so as that the Being, which injoys it, may be truly said to be *happy* in and by that Injoyment. And, by natural Evil, I mean that, which gives *Uneasiness* and *Grief*; so as that the Being, which suffers it, may be truly said to be *unhappy* or *miserable*. And,

AS these are plainly distinct and different in Nature: so one of them, necessarily and unavoidably, becomes the Object of our *Approbation* and *Pursuit*; and the other of our *Aversion* and *Shunning*. For, tho natural Good may be shunned, and natural Evil may be chosen, in some Instances: yet, in these Cases, they are not shunned or chosen for their own Sakes; but upon the account of some other Good or Evil, they stand related to. Thus we shun the Injoyment of Good; when that Injoyment is either a *Bar* to some *greater* Good to our selves, or others; or when it is *introductive* of some *greater* Evil to our selves, or others: or at least, when we judge that to be the Case. And thus we chuse natural Evil, when under the like Circumstances, but never for its own sake. And,

AS these are differently the Objects of our Approbation and Aversion; so they are capable

pable of being *communicated:* that is, one Being is capable of *giving* or *contributing* to the Happineſs or Miſery of another, and that too (as they are the Subjects of a *free Choice*) when it is in his Power, and he is at Liberty, either to *ſuſpend* the Exerciſe of that Ability, or to *exert* it; by giving or contributing to the Happineſs of another, or by giving or contributing to the contrary. And,

A S Happineſs and Miſery are capable of being communicated; ſo it is in the Uſe and Exerciſe of that *Capacity*, that *moral Good* and *Evil* conſiſts. When it is *rightly* uſed to the *Production* of *Happineſs*, that conſtitutes moral Good; and when it is *abuſed* to the *Production* of *Miſery*, that conſtitutes moral Evil; ſuppoſing the Subject, in which that Capacity reſides, is qualify'd to *diſcern* that one of theſe is a *right*, and the other a *wrong* Application of ſuch Power. I ſay, that one of theſe is a right, and the other a wrong Application of that Power. For,

A S we cannot but be convinced, from the Nature of the Thing, that Happineſs is *preferable* to Miſery; and that this muſt be the Caſe, with regard to all who are capable of either: ſo the *communicating* of one of theſe, muſt be *preferable* to the other alſo. That is, we cannot but be convinced from the nature of the Thing, that the communicating that to another, which is equally the Object of all *our Approbation* and Liking, is *right* and *good*:

and

and that the communicating that to another, which is equally the Object of all our Aversion and Dislike, is *wrong* and *evil*.

I SHALL not here enter into the Question; whether *personal Viciousness* may not render a Being the *proper* Object of *Misery*. I only consider Happiness and Misery *abstractedly*, from any *Merit* or *Demerit*, which they may be *related* to; and which may be the *Ground* of them. And, when they are thus abstractedly consider'd; then, I say, the communicating of Happiness is an Action, which, in the nature of the Thing, is *worthy* and *agreeable*; and which *approves* it self to our Understandings; and the communicating of Misery is an Action, which, in the nature of the Thing, is *base* and *disagreeable*, and which our Understandings cannot but *disapprove*. For, let but a Person consider *himself*, as made *miserable* by *another*, and he will instantly see, that the other has acted a *disingenuous* and *disagreeable* Part by him. And let him turn the Tables, and consider *himself*, as giving *Misery* to *another*; and then he will likewise unavoidably see, that it must, in the nature of the Thing, be equally as *base* and *vile* for him to make *another* miserable, as it is for that other to make *him* so. And, on the other side, let but a Man consider *himself*, as made *happy* by *another*; and then he will see, that the other has acted a Part, which, in the nature of the Thing, is really *honourable* and *praise-worthy*. And, let

him turn the Tables, and consider *himself* as giving *Happiness* to *another*; and, then he cannot but see the Action in the same Light. It will unavoidably appear to him as *reasonable* and as *agreeable*, that he should communicate Happiness to another, as that he should receive Happiness from him. But farther, I observe, that natural Good, and natural Evil comes under a two-fold Consideration, namely, *publick* and *private*. Publick Good is the Good of a *Whole*, and private Good is the Good of a *Part* of that Whole: When the Good of the Part is *distinct* from, and stands *opposed* to the Good of the Whole; publick and private Evil is defined after the same manner. And,

AS Good is, in the nature of the Thing, preferable to Evil, so *publick* Good is likewise *preferable* to *private* Good, when this comes in competition. For, when the Case so stands, as that the Good of an Individual, and the Good of the Whole, must of necessity, one or other of them, give place to the other; then every Man's Understanding convinces him, that the *lesser* Good ought in *reason* to give place to the *greater*; and that it is really *better*, in the nature of the Thing, that one Man should be *denied*, or that he should *deny himself* Pleasure, for the *sake* of the *Whole*; than, that the Whole should be *denied* for the *sake* of *One*. The case is the same with regard to *publick* and private Evil. And,

FROM

FROM hence arises the Distinction, which I have made betwixt *moral Fitness* and *Unfitness*: the Terms arising from the *right* and the *wrong* Application of that *Power*, which is lodged in every intelligent Being, to *communicate* Happiness or Misery, as aforesaid. So that an Action is morally good, or morally evil; and thereby becomes morally fit or unfit to be performed, as it is productive of, or some way or other stands related to, one or other of these.

IN all Cases, when publick Good and Evil does not come into the Question; there it is morally fit to *communicate Happiness*, and morally unfit to *communicate Misery*. If Happiness and Happiness come in competition; then it is morally fit to *prefer* the *greater* to the *less*. And if Misery and Misery come in competition; then it is morally fit to *prefer* the *less* to the *greater*. I shall not enter into every Question, which the Subject may be liable to; such as when a Man's own Happiness or Misery comes into competition with the Happiness and Misery of another; or when the Happiness or Misery of two others comes in competition; and the like. Every Man's Understanding will inform him, wherein the moral Fitness or Unfitness of every such Action does consist; when he has taken the *Relations* and *Circumstances* of the *Persons* and *Actions* into the Case. But,

IF the Question relates to publick Good, and Evil; then, I say, every Action, which upon the *whole* (taking in all *Circumstances* and *Consequences*) tends to and is productive of the *common Felicity*, is right and fit in the Nature of Things: And this Fitness I call moral. And every Action, which upon the *whole* is *hurtful* to *Mankind*, is morally evil. And,

FORASMUCH as Man is capable of making a wrong Judgment in the present Case; he not being always *apprized* of the Circumstances, which attend an Action, or the Consequences that follow it: Therefore, I say, that every Action, which is *directed* and *intended* to *introduce Happiness*, or for the *common Good*, is a vertuous Action, whether it introduces what was intended by it or not: and every Action, which is *directed* and *intended* to *introduce Misery*, or for the *common Hurt*; or which is performed at the *apparent Hazard* of the *Happiness* of others, or the *common Felicity*; every such Action is evil and vitious. So that

VIRTUE does not consist, as some have imagined, in *running cross to Nature*, by preferring Misery to Happiness; but in a *generous* Prosecution of the Happiness of *others*; and in denying our selves for the sake of *others*, and for the *common Tranquillity*. Neither does Vice consist in *following Nature*, *by preferring* Happiness to Misery: but in a

selfish

selfish monopolizing Happiness to our selves; and in prosecuting our own Pleasures and Desires, when they are *inconsistent* with or *destructive* of the Happiness of *others*, or of the *common Felicity*.

I AM sensible that there are two Cases with regard to moral Fitness and Unfitness, which at first sight may seem to have no Relation to, or be founded upon the Principles I have here laid down, *viz.* the making a *grateful Acknowledgment* of a *Favour* received, and the shewing *Resentment* for an *Injury* done when a proper occasion offers. But I persuade my self, that every Man, who carefully examines the Case, will see, that the forementioned Principles are the Ground and Reason of each of these. For if the communicating of Happiness was not *right* and *fit* in *itself*, there could be no *Foundation* for Gratitude. That is, if there were not something really valuable in the Action; then there could not be any thing *worthy* of our Acknowledgment. So that the Fitness of the latter, has an apparent Dependance upon the Fitness of the former. And on the other side, if the communicating of Unhappiness were not in the Nature of the Thing really *unfit*; then there could be no *Reason* or *Ground* for our Resentment: And consequently, the latter of these necessarily supposes the former, and is founded upon it. And,

THO God is the Author of *Nature*, and of those *Relations* which Things stand in one

to another; yet when Things are thus constituted and thus related, Good and Evil will *necessarily* and *unavoidably* arise from the Nature and from the Relations of the Things themselves, and not from the arbitrary Will and Pleasure of their Maker. Thus Pain will be *evil* and *afflictive*; even tho God should determine and declare the contrary. His Determination cannot possibly convince us, that Pain is *pleasant*; because we experimentally *feel* and *know* the contrary. And thus the communicating of Happiness will, in the Nature of the Thing, be really valuable in itself, and highly preferable to the communicating of Misery; whether God determines any thing concerning it, or not.

HAVING thus remov'd what gave occasion for the first Complaint, by stating the Notion of the Terms beforementioned; I now proceed to the

SECOND, namely, that I have been *pleading* the Cause of *Infidelity*; by which I suppose is meant Infidelity with regard to the *Christian* Revelation. But surely this Complaint is as *unkind*, as it is *groundless*. And all that, I think, is needful for me to say, in the present Case, is to request of the Complainers, to consider what a *Complement* they hereby pay the Christian Religion, by thus representing it as an *arbitrary Institution*; given by God, not out of *Kindness* to Mankind, but as an Instance of his *absolute Sovereignty* and *Dominion* over them: which must be the Case, if

what

what I have ſaid in my *Previous Queſtion*, is *injurious* to the Chriſtian Religion. And,

THUS much, I think, I may venture farther to ſay; that whether the preſent Complaint againſt me is juſt or not, yet the giving ſuch a *Repreſentation* of the Chriſtian Religion as aforeſaid, is moſt certainly *paving* the way to *Infidelity*. Tho I perſuade my ſelf, that there is not any thing, which can ſtrictly and properly be called the *Chriſtian Religion*; but which may be ſhewn to be the Effect of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, and not of *capricious Humour* and *arbitrary Pleaſure*.

THE *Chriſtian Revelation* gives us the moſt *beautiful* Repreſentation of *God*, with regard to his *moral Character*: It ſets him forth as the *Fountain* of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*; as the *Father* of *Mercys*, and the *God* of all *Conſolations*; yea, as *Love* it ſelf. And this leads me to enquire; what it is, that muſt conſtitute ſuch a Character; and wherein each of theſe conſiſts. Does not Wiſdom and Goodneſs conſiſt in a *right Application* of *Knowledge* and *Power*? Surely God is not *wiſe*, becauſe he is *knowing*; neither is he *good*, becauſe he is *powerful*: but he is both wiſe and good in the *right* Exerciſe of theſe; that is, as he applys his Knowledge and Power rightly in ſerving the *beſt* of *Purpoſes*: namely *Kindneſs*, and *Benevolence*. He is both wiſe and good, in calling a multitude of Creatures into Being capable of Happineſs; and in a *plentiful* Proviſion of all Things, neceſſary to make

make them so. He is merciful and loving; in that he shews the most tender Regard to the *Happiness* and *Well-being* of his Creatures. And,

IS this the Case? Then surely it must be most monstrous to suppose, that what I have said in my *Previous Question*, is *injurious* to the Christian Religion; seeing all that I have said, is no more than the *asserting* and *maintaining* God's *moral* Character, as aforesaid. And therefore, I desire it may be considered; whether such a Representation of me, be not *injurious* to the *Christian Religion*: because it considers the Christian Revelation, as a *Contradiction* to *itself*; by representing it as an Institution, which is inconsistent with the Character it gives of that Being, whom it claims for its Author.

IT is true, the religious *Schemes* of Christians are too often *mixed* and *compounded* of such *Contradictions*, as aforesaid. For in them Men are led to make *a general* acknowledgment of the Wisdom and Goodness of God; when the *Particulars* of those Schemes plainly represent him to be otherwise. But, I presume, this cannot be *justly* charged upon Christianity itself; and therefore I would desire those Men, when they *interpret* the Christian Revelation, to take the *Nature* and the *Fitness of Things* into the Case; or else they will be in danger of offering *Violence* to the *moral* Character of our *heavenly Father*.

IF Men would but consult the *Nature* and *Reason of Things*, in their Inquirys concern-

ing

ing the *Properties* and *Conduct* of the Almighty; it would prevent them from raising all those *false* and *unworthy* Images of God, which are too frequently pictured in their Minds. Men are apt to form their Conceptions of *God* and of his *Actions*, from what they see *grand* and *magisterial* in the *Princes* and *Potentates* of the *Earth*; only with this Difference: In Men they consider it, as *limited* and *finite*; but when they carry their Thoughts to God, they consider it in him, as *boundless* and *infinite*.

THAT *Pomp*, that *Arbitrariness*, that *Resentment*, that *insatiable Revenge*, that *Contempt*, &c. which some earthly Monarchs put on; and which command the *Fears*, the *humble Addresses*, the *fulsom Flatteries*, and the *slavish Submission* of those that are under them: This is that *Glass*, which Men look thro when they take a *View* of their Creator. And this has led them, not to change the *Glory* of the *incorruptible God* into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds and four-footed Beasts and creeping Things; but into that, which is much worse, namely into the *Likeness* and *Similitude* of an *evil Spirit*: That is, Men have represented God, as under the Influence of *evil* and *vicious* Affections; such as Cruelty, insatiable Revenge, *&c.* which is the *true Picture* of an evil Spirit.

ST. *PAUL* told the *Corinthians*, 1 Epist. Chap. 10. v. 20. That *the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to Devils*, and not

not to God. That is, the *Gentiles* by their Sacrifices *addressed* themselves to Beings (real or fictitious) which they apprehended to be under the Power of *evil Affections*; and so they sacrificed to Devils. And well had it been, if this could have been charged *only* on the *Gentiles.* But alas! some *Christians* have drawn such a Picture of the *Deity*, as makes him *resemble* the *chiefest of Devils.* They have represented God, as calling a Multitude of Creatures into Being, *on purpose* to make them *miserable.* And that he might have a *Colour* of doing *Justice* in the Case, they consider him as placing those Creatures in such a state, as that they must *necessarily transgress*; and then *punishing* them *eternally* for that Transgression: than which, I think, nothing can be more *cruel* and *barbarous*; it being far worse, than what is commonly charged upon the *Devil himself.* The Devil is usually represented, as *tempting* Men to that which exposes them to divine Displeasure. And so he endeavours to make them *miserable*; but leaves it at their *Choice* whether they will *follow* his Temptations or *not:* whereas God is considered as *ordaining* to *Misery*, *antecedent* to Men's *Choice.* And,

THO these and the like religious Principles reflect *great Dishonour* upon God with regard to his *moral* Character, yet the Men of these Principles pretend to have the *highest Zeal* for his Honour and Glory. And accordingly, if they can find a Person, who they think has taken up false Notions of the Deity,

Deity, with regard to his *natural* Character; namely his natural *Propertys*, his *Personality*, and the like: then they open their Mouths like a Trumpet to proclaim such a one's *great Wickedness*, as they are pleased to call it; and charge him with *Blasphemy*, and with doing the *greatest Dishonour* to his Maker: not considering that the Dishonour done to God, when considered in his *natural* Capacity, bears no Comparison with that much greater Dishonour done to him when considered in his *moral*.

SUPPOSE a Man to be of a *healthy vigorous Constitution*, and that he is really a *wise honest vertuous* Man: And suppose any one should say of him, that he is *weak* and *infirm* in his *Body*; and another should say, that he is a *Fool* or a *Knave*: in both Cases the Man's Character is *injur'd*; in the former in his *natural*, in the latter in his *moral* Capacity. And here, I presume, it will be allow'd by all, that the Injury done in the *former* Case bears no Comparison to the Injury done to the Man's Character in the *latter*. And yet this is the very Case with respect to *God*. The *Injury* done him with regard to his *natural* Character, is as it were nothing when compared with that *much greater*, which is done him in his *moral*. I shall not here aggravate the Case; but leave it to every Man's serious Consideration. And,

NOW I think, I begin to *exceed* the Bounds of a *Letter*; and to cast a *Blemish* upon my former Performance. For will not every one

be